EDINBURGH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL

Nicola Benedetti Brings the Edinburgh International Festival to NHS Hospital with Live Performance

Edinburgh International Festival Director Nicola Benedetti, photo by Mihaela Bodlovic

- Edinburgh International Festival Director and Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti** performed alongside guitarist **Plínio Fernandes** for staff, patients, families and volunteers at the Royal Hospital for Children & Young People Edinburgh

- The International Festival's NHS Festival Sessions, in partnership with **NHS Lothian Charity: Tonic Arts,** bring Festival artists into hospitals year-round, creating moments of musical connections that recognise the powerful impact music can have on wellbeing

- As part of a wider vision to remove barriers to cultural discovery, the International Festival's range of affordability initiatives include **over 1,000 donated tickets** for NHS staff, charity workers and low-income benefit recipients, and **£10 Affordable tickets** for every event in the programme

MEDIA IMAGES AVAILABLE HERE

1–24 AUGUST 2025
eif.co.uk / @edintfest

26 June, Edinburgh: Today Edinburgh International Festival Director and Scottish violinist **Nicola Benedetti** performed as part of a series of NHS Festival Sessions, a heartfelt partnership between the International Festival and NHS Lothian Charity: Tonic Arts bringing transformative live performances directly to patients, families, staff and volunteers across healthcare settings.

Now in its second year, the NHS Festival Sessions take place regularly year-round, bringing an exciting array of International Festival artists into NHS Lothian spaces to create curated moments of musical and emotional connection. Previous artists include the **Royal Scottish National Orchestra, Bamberger Symphoniker** and the **Philharmonia Orchestra**, visiting sites such as the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, Royal Edinburgh Hospital and St John's Hospital, Livingston.

Benedetti's performance is part of her wider Festival vision: to ensure that the joy of life-altering live performance is accessible to the broadest possible audience. This year, the International Festival continues to break down barriers to cultural participation with a range of affordability initiatives. These include:

- **£10 Affordable tickets** for every event in the programme, available for anyone who needs them by quoting the promo code 'INVITED'

- **Over 1,000 donated tickets** for NHS staff, charity workers, and low-income benefit recipients in partnership with **Tickets for Good**.

- **Over 2,500 free tickets** for Scotland's young musicians aged 8–18 through the **Young Musician's Pass**.

- **Half-price tickets for under 18s and D/deaf, disabled & neurodivergent people** for all Festival performances

Festival Director Nicola Benedetti said, *"I believe in removing barriers to cultural discovery. Everyone is invited to the International Festival – that's why half of our tickets will be sold for £30 or less, and by extending our performances into community and healthcare settings, we're reaching people where they are, and bringing a taste of the Festival to those who may be unable to attend."*

Len McCaffer, Tonic Arts Manager at NHS Lothian Charity, said: *"Our partnership with the Edinburgh International Festival through the NHS Festival Sessions is a fantastic way to bring the transformative power of music directly into our hospitals. These year-round performances are a hugely anticipated part of our participatory arts calendar, making live performances accessible for those who would otherwise be unable to attend."*

"It is such a privilege to work together to bring world-class artists and musicians like Nicola Benedetti to perform directly to our patients, staff, and volunteers. Witnessing the joy and emotional connection these live sessions create, really demonstrates the importance and positive impact of the arts on wellbeing."

This summer's International Festival will also see flagship projects that bring groups into the heart of August's performances, developing long-term connections with Edinburgh's

communities to find enrich local life and reflect the ideas, ambitions and creative interests of different groups within the International Festival's year-round work.

This year's activities focus on three key areas identified with staff and residents: Dementia Friendly activities, Skills and Training Development, and tackling Social Isolation. Throughout the year—and during August's Festival— the range of creative, community-led projects includes a six-week artist-led course for New Scots that culminates in a co-designed August festival event featuring musicians from the **Aga Khan music programme.**

A multi-year **Community Connections Hub** partnership with **Space @ Broomhouse Hub** includes collaboration with citizens from across the neighbourhood connecting with Festival artists. The residents respond creatively to music by the **London Symphony Orchestra,** inspired by the 2025 Festival theme *The Truth We Seek* and their work will be shared with the community at Space @ Broomhouse Hub.

In partnership with the Wellbeing onto Work (WOW) project, an eight-week course has also been delivered for 10 young people. The course focuses on building confidence and communication skills within Festival environments, with graduates offered supported, paid work experience during the Festival. For the first time, the International Festival will also present a Dementia Friendly Concert in collaboration with the **Scottish Chamber Orchestra**—a relaxed, welcoming performance designed for people living with dementia and their caregivers.

For more information on the range of tickets for performances across music, dance, theatre and opera at the 2025 Edinburgh International Festival, visit https://www.eif.co.uk/affordability.

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For **media images** – see here

NOTES TO EDITORS

About Edinburgh International Festival
Edinburgh International Festival is the original festival. It's the one that started it all, the igniting spark that established Edinburgh as the world's Festival City.

The next International Festival takes place 1–24 August 2025, under the direction of Festival Director and Scottish violinist Nicola Benedetti. Benedetti's vision for the Festival is to create the deepest level of experience, through the highest quality art, for the broadest possible audience.

The Edinburgh International Festival was founded in 1947, the inspired idea of Rudolf Bing, a cultural pioneer and Jewish refugee, working with a group of civic and artistic leaders.

Together, they created a festival that transcends political boundaries through a global celebration of the performing arts.

Over the following 77 years the International Festival's hand-picked programme of world-leading dance, opera, music and theatre has continued to bring people of different cultures and viewpoints together every August. Meanwhile, the International Festival's sister festivals have grown up around it – each of them contributing to the atmosphere of unparalleled excitement that transforms the city each summer.

Shining far beyond what you see on stage, the Festival also offers year-round pathways for people of all ages and backgrounds to discover and participate in live performance. As a charity, the International Festival rely on support from members, donors, funders and partners, who enable us to deliver long-term community projects and affordability initiatives. Learn more at **eif.co.uk/about .**

About NHS Lothian Charity

NHS Lothian Charity is the official charity of NHS Lothian and the only charity dedicated to supporting all its work, all its staff and all the patients and families it cares for.

Our expertise and experience, and the support we provide, help create opportunities that enable NHS Lothian to foster innovation, explore ideas and transform the way that care is delivered.

Tonic Arts is NHS Lothian Charity's Arts in Health Programme, improving and supporting the health and wellbeing of NHS Lothian patients, visitors and staff by enhancing the NHS Lothian healthcare environment and enriching the patient experience. In partnership with NHS Lothian, specialist arts organisations and cross-sector partners, Tonic Arts delivers a comprehensive programme that includes major art and design enhancements; a relevant and accessible art collection; an engaging exhibitions programme; and stimulating participatory activities, artist residencies, performances, and events.

Find out more at tonicarts.nhslothiancharity.org