

**STRICT EMBARGO TO TUESDAY 1 MARCH 2022, 12 MIDDAY**

## **Nicola Benedetti to Become Next Festival Director of Edinburgh International Festival**



Photo credit: Franz Galo

- Multi award-winning violinist and educator Nicola Benedetti to take role as Festival Director of Edinburgh International Festival, beginning 1 October 2022
- Nicola Benedetti will be the first Scottish and the first female Festival Director in the International Festival's 75-year history

**MEDIA IMAGE AVAILABLE [HERE](#)  
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*1 March 2022, Edinburgh:* Today the world-renowned violinist, educator and arts and culture advocate, Nicola Benedetti CBE becomes the Director Designate of the Edinburgh International Festival, and will become Festival Director on 1 October 2022. In taking the role

she will be both the first Scottish and the first female Festival Director since the Festival began in 1947.

A GRAMMY and Brit Award-winning violinist as well as BBC Music Magazine's 2021 'Personality of the Year,' awarded in part for her online support of musicians during the pandemic, Nicola is a passionate ambassador for music education as well as one of the most influential classical artists today.

**Nicola Benedetti**, Director Designate of Edinburgh International Festival says, *"I am deeply honoured to contribute to the long and rich history of the Edinburgh International Festival and the cultural landscape of Scotland. This festival was founded on principles of reconciliation and the ideals of art transcending political and cultural fracture. Following in the footsteps of the wonderful achievements of Fergus Linehan and his predecessors, I will uphold these values and greatly look forward to serving this festival, its mission of cultural exchanges, and the people of Scotland."*

Born in the Scottish town of Irvine, of Italian heritage, Nicola began violin lessons at the age of four, studied at Yehudi Menuhin School and has since toured internationally with some of the world's greatest orchestras and conductors. In December 2020, Nicola formed the Benedetti Baroque Orchestra and regularly champions the commissioning of new works, including the recent violin concertos by Mark Simpson and Wynton Marsalis (which won a GRAMMY in 2020). Nicola was awarded the Queen's Medal for Music in 2017, the youngest ever recipient, and has received nine honorary degrees to date.

Nicola formalised her commitment to music education in 2019 when she established The Benedetti Foundation. Since its launch, the Foundation has worked with over 29,000 participants, aged 2 to 92, from 103 countries through its in-person workshops and online sessions for young people, students, teachers and adults. The Foundation unites those who believe that music is integral to a great education and demonstrates teaching through innovative and creative musical experiences accessible to all.

Nicola takes the role following a successful eight year tenure of Fergus Linehan, who was last year awarded the Edinburgh Award for his innovative contribution to the arts and Edinburgh's cultural heritage. His festivals have featured many of the world's leading theatre, dance, orchestral and chamber music ensembles and have expanded the programme to include large-scale, free events and music genres previously underrepresented in the Festival. Along with the International Festival team, he successfully guided the Festival through the challenging years of the pandemic.

**Keith Skeoch**, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Edinburgh International Festival  
*"It is such a pleasure to welcome Nicola Benedetti as both the first woman and the first Scottish director of the Edinburgh International Festival. In many ways she reflects the spirit of this festival; internationally recognised and respected but Scottish to her core, she's dedicated to advocating world-class music making and innovating new ways to bring it to audiences."*

*"As an artist, her string of collaborators reads like a who's who of the world of classical music and as an educator she has reached tens of thousands worldwide. I have no doubt that she will bring a wealth of new ideas to the organisation and build on Fergus' exceptional work from the last eight years."*

**Leonie Bell**, Chair of Edinburgh International Festival Nominations Committee, said *“This is a hugely exciting appointment for the Edinburgh International Festival. Nicola is a world-renowned, and world class, musician and performer, as well as being a dedicated and passionate ambassador for the arts and its transformative power to change lives. Nicola will also become the first woman and Scottish person to lead the Festival in its 75-year history. I know everyone who holds the Edinburgh International Festival close to their hearts will eagerly anticipate the vision and energy that Nicola will bring to the Festival's future.”*

**Rt Hon. Nicola Sturgeon MSP**, First Minister of Scotland said, *“The Edinburgh International Festival has a worldwide reputation for its excellent work in bringing world-leading artists together, celebrating the performing arts, and promoting Scotland’s rich culture and heritage to an international audience.*

*“I’m sure that people across the country are looking forward to supporting the Festival's full in-person return after two years, and welcoming visitors and artists from around the world to Scotland.*

*“I welcome Nicola Benedetti’s appointment as Director - especially as she becomes the first woman to ever hold the role. Her experience in promoting Scotland’s cultural scene to audiences around the world will be invaluable and I wish her every success.”*

**Councillor Donald Wilson**, Edinburgh’s Culture and Communities Convener, said *“Since Nicola Benedetti first performed in Edinburgh many years ago, she's taken to stages across the world, dazzled audiences, become a household name, and now she returns to the Festival City to head the prestigious Edinburgh International Festival. As we look forward as a city, it is so encouraging to see leaders like Nicola returning home and bringing their enthusiasm and expertise as advocates, not to mention her impressive track record as an educator - both across Scotland and the UK.”*

**Iain Munro**, Chief Executive of Creative Scotland said *“75 years on from the Festival's founding in the shadow of the Second World War, we find ourselves again turning to culture to lift spirits, provide inspiration and transcend boundaries. Fergus Linehan has successfully led this festival through the most trying time in its history, but as the International Festival refocuses on bringing world cultures together in 2022, it also announces a leader that in her own right has put Scotland on a world stage and has united cultures through music-making. Nicola Benedetti is an exciting and inspired choice as the Edinburgh International Festival's new Director, and I look forward to welcoming her personally to the position later this year.”*

**– ENDS –  
NOTES FOR EDITORS**

***Nicola Benedetti will not be available for interviews at this time.***

Alongside her role as Festival Director, Nicola will continue to perform internationally and to lead the Benedetti Foundation. She will naturally be more selective with her engagements in order to ensure she fulfils each of her commitments.

#### **Media Contact**

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### **About Edinburgh International Festival**

Edinburgh International Festival is the world's leading performing arts festival, featuring the finest performers from the worlds of dance, opera, music and theatre.

Created in 1947 to celebrate the enduring human spirit following the adversity of war, the International Festival serves as an annual cultural exchange for three weeks every August. This year the International Festival celebrates its 75th Anniversary and will take place from 5-28 August 2022. For more information visit [www.eif.co.uk](http://www.eif.co.uk)

Edinburgh International Festival was supported by AEM International in the recruitment of this role of Festival Director.

### **About Nicola Benedetti**

Nicola Benedetti is one of the most sought-after violinists of her generation. Her ability to captivate audiences with her innate musicianship and spirited presence, coupled with her wide appeal as a high-profile advocate for classical music, has made her one of the most influential classical artists of today.

In December 2020, Nicola formed the Benedetti Baroque Orchestra which gathers freelance period-instrument players who collectively join together to create the highest level of collaborative and energised music making. *Baroque* was released on Decca Classics in July 2021, and features Nicola play-directing this newly formed ensemble. The album reached number one in the UK's Official Classical Album Chart and received a 5\* review in *The Times*.

Nicola champions the commissioning of new works which has recently included Mark Simpson's critically acclaimed Violin Concerto, written for Nicola with the London Symphony Orchestra, and Wynton Marsalis's Violin Concerto which won a GRAMMY Award for "Best Classical Instrumental Solo" in 2020.

Nicola tours internationally with some of the world's greatest orchestras and conductors. In 2021-2022, Nicola opened the Barbican Centre's season and amongst others, collaborates with the London Symphony Orchestra, Netherlands Radio Philharmonic and Cincinnati Symphony. Other season highlights include engagements with LA Philharmonic, Royal Stockholm Philharmonic Orchestra, play-directing with the Scottish Chamber Orchestra, a tour to Spain with the Philharmonia Orchestra, as well as being "Artist in Residence" at this year's Aldeburgh Festival.

Nicola records exclusively for Decca (Universal Music) and her recording catalogue includes works from Shostakovich and Glazunov Violin Concerti, the Szymanowski Concerti (London Symphony Orchestra/Daniel Harding) to *Homecoming; A Scottish Fantasy*, which made Nicola the first solo British violinist since the 1990s to enter the Top 20 of the Official UK Album Chart.

In 2019, Nicola formalised her commitment to music in education when she established The Benedetti Foundation. Since its launch, the Foundation has worked with over 29,000 participants, age 2-92, from 103 countries through its transformative in-person workshops and online sessions for young people, students, teachers and adults. The Foundation unites those who believe that music is integral to a great education and demonstrates ground-breaking teaching by producing and delivering innovative and creative musical experiences accessible to all.

Nicola plays the Gariel Stradivarius (1717), courtesy of Jonathan Moulds.