

Benedetti named as the new Director of Edinburgh International Festival

The famed Scottish violinist and advocate for the arts, Nicola Benedetti, CBE, is to become the Director of the Edinburgh International Festival from 1 October 2022.

She will be the first female festival director and the first Scot to fill the role. She takes over from Fergus Linehan who is retiring after a most successful eight year tenure. Linehan was presented with the prestigious Edinburgh Award in recognition of his innovative work encompassing all genres of music and performance art.

Nicola Benedetti said: "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.



Keith Skeoch, then CEO of Aberdeen Standard Investments, at the performance by the LA Philharmonic at Tynecastle PHOTO © The Edinburgh Reporter

Keith Skeoch, Chair of the Board of Trustees, Edinburgh International Festival, said

“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.”

First Minister, Nicola Sturgeon, 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.”



Nicola Benedetti CBE