

Maker&Son



BENEDETTI
FOUNDATION

Violinist Nicola Benedetti & Maker&Son collaborate in new partnership

World exclusive performance of a new arrangement by the Ayoub Sisters of Ernest Bloch's "Prayer" for solo violin and string quartet

Watch the performance [here](#)

Nicola Benedetti collaborates with Maker&Son to record the world exclusive performance of a new arrangement by the Ayoub Sisters of Ernest Bloch's "Prayer". Originally composed in 1924 for Cello and Piano, this new arrangement was specially commissioned by Maker&Son for violinist Nicola Benedetti and string quartet featuring Yume Fujise and Charlie Westhoff (violin), Jenny Lewisohn (viola) and Ariane Zandi (cello). This live recording was made at Kemps House, the home of Maker&Son Founder Alex Willcock.

Through their deep love of classical music, Alex Willcock and Nicola Benedetti began exploring ways of working together. They both want to find ways to share the emotion and the experience that music can offer both the performers and the listeners. Some music has a unique and extraordinary way of elevating an experience, offering complete immersion and connection with the moment, and this is the gift they hope to share, by working in partnership.

With so much going on in the world today - in so many ways - it's natural to feel a sense of melancholy, or mourning. And yet, current experiences are also encouraging people to reflect, to share and learn from each other, and to communicate in different ways. The poignancy of these times and the ability of this piece to capture this zeitgeist led to the making of this new arrangement of "Prayer", by Ernest Bloch. A composer that was so admired in his day, many considered him to be the fourth 'B' after Bach, Beethoven and Brahms.

In an interview which can be watched [here](#), Alex and Nicola talk about the serendipitous events that connected them and led to working together. They said, "Our hope is that we can share the experience and the emotional connection that we both have with classical music, with as many people as possible. We hope to share our passion and to offer that experience, or sense of being completely immersed in beautiful music."

Nicola Benedetti further commented, 'Music can uplift through joy and it can console through reflection. Sometimes you are looking for something to make you feel more of what you are feeling. And through the process is a kind of cleansing, or a rebirth of your most uplifted self. I know I understand that experience myself and I am sure most people do. Sometimes you go deeper to come up.

'We want simply to share the internal experience that we have with music in the most visceral possible way that we can, through a camera and a screen and to do that in a way that brings people deep inside that experience. It's not easy, but we both have the same commitment to wanting to do that, for as many people as possible. So, to take a piece of music like this, that we obviously feel so much of that raw emotion for and to be trying to capture, not so much the practicalities of playing it, or even the slightly more superficial layer of performance, but allowing people inside of the mind and heart of what it is that we are experiencing.

Your connection to music can only be what it is, there is nothing manufactured that will ever be as powerful as what your actual most powerful reaction is in that moment. The strength of the instinct that we both shared about 'Prayer' is more powerful than trying to match a piece to a concept or trying to match a piece to a mood. This has been the other way around, the piece has spoken to Alex, it has spoken to me, originally

when I was 10, and again now. We have a mutual belief in how that has spoken to us that we are going with... and we are trusting and we're sharing.'

Alex Willcock added, 'What we feel about this piece is how rich it is in terms of its emotional expression. Being immersed in the moment, being immersed in the emotion is something that, as a musician, you can experience in an extraordinary way. But also, as a member of the audience, there are times when something really special happens. We wanted to capture that moment, that indefinable element of immersion, (some describe as a transcendental moment) where you are literally removed from the present moment into something that becomes even more present, in a way. So, everything that we've wanted to do - with the arrangement, with the film, is to immerse our audience inside the music, inside the emotion and connect deeply with all that it brings.'

Composer Ernest Bloch combined his globetrotting musical life with a profound spiritual yearning. Born in Geneva in 1880, he studied in Brussels and moved to the US in 1916, eventually settling in Portland, Oregon, where he died in 1959. Though famous in his lifetime for large-scale works like his opera *Macbeth* (1910), Bloch is lesser known these days, yet some of his rhapsodic song-like compositions – notably *Schelomo* for cello and orchestra (1916) – are still part of the concert repertoire today. Despite being influenced by some of the leading composers of his time – including Mahler, Debussy and his teacher, violinist Eugène Ysaÿe – his music was essentially a late flowering of Romanticism.

Bloch strongly identified with his Jewish faith and wrote several works directly inspired by Jewish liturgy and folklore, among them *Schelomo* for cello and orchestra (1916), *Israel* for orchestra (1916), and *Baal Shem* for violin and orchestra (1939). 'I aspire to write Jewish music - not for the sake of self-advertisement, but because I am sure that this is the only way in which I can produce music of vitality and significance', he suggested.

About Maker&Son

- Maker&Son was launched in 2018 by Alex Willcock and his son, Felix Conran. Together, they have created a range of natural, life-lasting upholstered luxury furniture that is unified by an uncompromising commitment to comfort.
- Alex demonstrated an innate musical talent from a young age. Two years after picking up the violin, he received a scholarship to study classical music at Eton College. Here his interest in design was formed.
- Alex left Eton in 1982 and went on to study furniture making at Parnham College, Dorset, which was founded in 1977 by the influential British designer and furniture maker, John Makepeace. Whilst at Parnham, Alex was taught by a number of industry experts including Terence Conran, with whom he worked closely for many years, designing and serving as Creative Director for the Conran Group.
- Felix Conran is the co-founder of Maker&Son. He was born in Australia but grew up in the UK when his parents, Alex Willcock and Sophie Conran, returned shortly after his birth. Felix was immersed in art and design from a young age. His grandfather is the British designer, Sir Terrance Conran, and many of his family have forged successful creative careers encompassing music, food and design.
- After studying Central St Martins University of Arts in London, Felix began shaping the concept for Maker&Son alongside Alex. "We knew that we wanted to create a completely natural product, made locally and ethically, and we knew that we wanted something that would strike an emotional connection," he says. "In order for it to do that, it needed to come from an emotional place."
- "From the outset, the inspiration for Maker&Son has been comfort in the broadest sense," explains Alex. "Our products are both physically and ethically comfortable: you can sit on one of our sofas knowing that your physical comfort hasn't caused problems for people or the planet."
- This unique, wide-ranging experience has culminated in the creation of Maker&Son, a family company which is headquartered in Alex's home, Kemps House – a characterful, 17th-century farmhouse fringed by private woodland. Alex has lived here for 15 years and his five children have grown up here. "Until we moved to Kemps House, I never thought it would be possible to fall in love with a house," he says. "There's something about Kemps that is truly special. In many ways, it's the third founder of Maker&Son."
- www.makerandson.com

About Nicola Benedetti

- Violinist Nicola Benedetti is one of the world's leading advocates for quality music education, the role of arts and culture in the wider community and the transformational effect it has on all young people.
- She has been committed to education projects since the age of 15 and launched the Benedetti Foundation in 2019. In the past year, Nicola and the Foundation have worked with over 16,000 participants from 74 countries across the world.
- Nicola is committed to supporting music practitioners and has been President of the European String Teachers Association since July 2018.
- Nicola has contributed to campaigns to save and preserve music services across the country
- She holds named positions in several of the UK's most established and high-quality youth music organisations including the National Children's Orchestras, Sistema Scotland, National Youth Orchestras of Scotland, Music in Secondary Schools Trust, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland and many more.
- Fiercely committed to music education and to developing young talent, Nicola has formed associations with schools, music colleges and local authorities.
- She is credited with broadening the appeal of classical music to young and new audiences through her extensive education work and appearances at events such as the Commonwealth Games Opening Ceremony and iTunes Festival.
- Nicola was the winner of the GRAMMY Award for Best Classical Instrumental Solo in 2020; awarded the Queen's Medal for Music in 2017, the youngest ever recipient, and was appointed a Commander of the Order of the British Empire (CBE) in the 2019 New Year Honours, in recognition of her services to music.
- Nicola Benedetti is one of the most sought-after violinists of her generation. Her ability to captivate audiences with her innate musicianship and dynamic 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.
- She is in much demand with major orchestras and conductors across the globe and this continues across the 2020/21 season with concerts (when able to happen) throughout the UK, Europe and America.
- www.nicolabenedetti.co.uk

About the Benedetti Foundation

- The Benedetti Foundation puts on transformative orchestra-based workshops for young people and teachers, that showcase what Music Education at its best can look and feel like.
- The Benedetti Foundation unites those who believe music is integral to a great education, and inspires collective action targeted at increasing its reach and quality.
- The Foundation does this through uncovering and sharing its best practices and celebrating its greatest advocates, whilst loudly demonstrating a reenergised vision for the future.
- 50% of the activity carried out by the organisation is for teachers. Teaching music well is an enormous responsibility and is hugely challenging.
- The Benedetti Foundation is fiercely committed to providing meaningful support, extensive information and a sense of uplift, inspiration and respite to as many teachers as possible as well as to promoting music education practices which encourage both musical and civic betterment.
- The first three workshops took place in Glasgow (3 – 6 January), London (10 – 12 January) and Dundee (6 – 8 March). Across the three weekends, the Benedetti Foundation reached just shy of 3,000 young people and 350 teachers. Participants attended from across the UK and the Republic of Ireland stretching from Shetland to the Isle of Wight. In Scotland there are young musicians from 31 of the 32 local authorities with 81% state educated in Glasgow and 75% state educated in Dundee. 30 of the 32 London boroughs were represented with 64% of participants state educated.
- The Virtual Benedetti Sessions took place in lockdown and provided musicians of all ages and stages, from all over the world, with three weeks of consistent online tutorials and inspirational workshops. Over 7,000 participants ages 2 – 92 from 66 countries prepared collectively for a final weekend of activity on 30 & 31 May, celebrating the coming together of the global music community.

- Since July, the Foundation has been running Mini Sessions presenting short, focused workshops designed to provide in depth and detailed exploration on a wide variety of topics. To date the Foundation has delivered 38 sessions to over 6,000 participants.
- Since its launch in January 2020, the Foundation has met with 16,000 participants from 72 countries.
- The Benedetti Foundation is a registered charity. It receives no government money and is currently funded through generous philanthropy, corporate sponsorship, trusts and foundations.
- www.benedettifoundation.org