

## Nicola Benedetti wins Grammy

British violinist Nicola Benedetti won the Grammy for Best Classical Instrumental Solo at the ceremony on 26 January. She received the award for her album of Wynton Marsalis works, featuring premiere recordings of his Violin Concerto in D major and *Fiddle Dance Suite* for solo violin, both written for her.



Benedetti performed 'Bye-Bye Breakdown' from *Fiddle Dance Suite* at the awards ceremony. The last time a classical violin soloist played at the event was in 2009, when Hilary Hahn played the Preludio from Bach's Violin Partita no.3 in E major.

Conductor Cristian Măcelaru picked up an award for his contribution to the recording of the Violin Concerto. Marsalis received a nomination for Best Contemporary Classical Composition for the work.

The concerto was co-commissioned by the London Symphony Orchestra (LSO), Ravinia, LA Philharmonic, National Symphony Orchestra Washington, Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra and Netherlands Radio Philharmonic. Benedetti performed the world premiere with the LSO under conductor James Gaffigan in London in November 2015.

## Boston Symphony cancels Asia tour owing to coronavirus fear

As *The Strad* went to press, the Boston Symphony Orchestra (BSO) announced the cancellation of its eight-concert tour to East Asia, because of the increasing danger posed by the coronavirus. Scheduled for 6–16 February, the tour would have included performances in Seoul, Taipei, Hong Kong and Shanghai.

'With the health and wellbeing of the musicians always of foremost concern, we have cancelled the entire tour,' BSO president and CEO Mark Volpe confirmed. 'Unfortunately, this includes the BSO's performances in Seoul, Taipei and Hong Kong – areas much less impacted by the virus – as it remains unclear how travel in and out of these regions will be affected in the coming weeks. On behalf of [music director] Andris Nelsons and the musicians of the Boston Symphony Orchestra, we are all deeply disappointed that we will not be able to perform for the wonderful audiences.'

On 27 January the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) issued updated travel guidance for China, recommending that travellers avoid all non-essential travel to the country (Level 3 Travel Health Notice).

### PREMIERE of the MONTH

## Celestial beings

Three artists' views of a dazzling planetary event

COMPOSER **Courtney Bryan**

WORK **Syzygy**

ARTIST **Jennifer Koh (violin) Chicago Sinfonietta/Mei-Ann Chen**

DATE **7 March**

PLACE **Wentz Concert Hall, Chicago, IL, US [bit.ly/2tY2JDd](https://bit.ly/2tY2JDd)**



Courtney Bryan



Jennifer Koh

'There is space in our world for all of us and for all of our stories,' writes US violinist Jennifer Koh in the introduction to her project The New American Concerto. She founded the initiative in 2016 to celebrate composers from minority backgrounds, whose work often goes overlooked. 'How can the field of classical music draw upon the cultural richness contained within our diverse country?' she asks. The latest answer is a concerto by US pianist and composer Courtney Bryan that takes its inspiration from works of visual art by three women of colour – architect Maya Lin and painters Alma Thomas and Frida Kahlo.

Like Koh's determination to broaden the relevance of her work by using it to promote the diversity of composers working today, Bryan uses her music to confront the harsh realities of life, both today and in the past. 'My first musical memories are of our Episcopal church at home

in New Orleans,' she says. 'I often work with sacred or spiritual ideas, but my music engages with society, too, usually from an African-American perspective.'

The title of Bryan's work, *Syzygy*, is a term borrowed from astronomy that describes an alignment of bodies in the night sky. 'I saw Alma Thomas's colourful painting *Eclipse* before I knew how I wanted to approach the concerto,' Bryan explains. 'I decided to make the duality of its subject matter the theme of my piece and started looking around for other imagery that played with the same ideas of light and dark. Frida Kahlo uses the symbolism of the sun and moon in lots of her paintings, and Maya Lin's *Eclipsed Time* is an installation that blocks out an area of light in New York's Penn Station every midnight. Each of my concerto's three movements approaches the idea of an eclipse in a different way, pitching pairs of themes, motifs and tonalities against each other until one obscures the other.'

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