



Unai Sánchez was overjoyed to receive the instrument the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation is lending him for the years ahead. Since 2025, he has already performed with it at numerous concerts in Germany and abroad.

“We Have a 500-Year Plan for Our Mission”

There are many ways to support highly gifted musicians. A foundation established in Frankfurt am Main is now adding an entirely new approach: It offers private individuals, foundations, and companies the opportunity to support outstanding young talent directly through an instrument scholarship. The goal is an impact that is visible today and, through the instrument itself, will endure for centuries to come. A conversation with Christian Reister, founder and managing director of the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation gGmbH.

When people who want to support gifted musicians approach you, what motivates them?

Christian Reister: People who donate to support gifted musicians want to “give something back.” When talented young musicians are able to play the instruments they urgently need for their development but cannot afford themselves, that is an extremely valuable contribution to society. It is also important to these donors to create something that will long outlive them — that is the core of our model.

Do you see other reasons as well?

It comes down to passion! Many of our donors share our enthusiasm for musical traditions. Very often, they have a genuine desire to help preserve classical music and the high culture that emerged in Europe. The connection to the young generation of artists, who pursue their own development with dedication and passion, is another important reason — and it builds a bridge from tradition to the present day.

Are your donors classic patrons of the arts?

Absolutely! Supporting something that would otherwise never have the chance to come into being is the essence of patronage. When we think, for example, of the incredible works of art and scientific discoveries that the patronage of the Medici family brought forth for all of humanity, I see our donors squarely in that tradition — as “the Medici of today.” Today’s patrons, too, create something that would not exist without them: sustainable support for talent at the very highest level.

How exactly does donating to support gifted musicians work?

As a nonprofit institution, we use the donations we receive to acquire instruments of exceptional tonal quality and lend them free of charge to particularly gifted young musicians. Every amount is welcome. It becomes truly special when someone funds an entire instrument – which is possible with gifts starting at €65,000 and in the six-figure range. Such an instrument scholarship can bear the donor's name if desired, with an impact that extends indefinitely into the future.

Why is this kind of support so important?

For the duration of the loan, the young musicians we support gain access to top-tier instruments with an outstanding sound. For our scholarship recipients, that is life-changing: Being able to realize their full potential once they have the instrument that suits them perfectly is liberating and hugely motivating. We regularly see them make a leap in performance that leads to excellent competition results and far more promising career prospects.

In addition to supporting gifted young talent, the Foundation is also committed to preserving valuable cultural heritage. What does that mean in practice?

That's right. Our mission also includes preserving and caring for these instruments as cultural treasures of immeasurable value. In a sense, they are entrusted to us, and they are meant to make their voices heard for centuries to come. This means we take care of regular maintenance, tonal adjustments, and any repairs that may be needed. Naturally, the instruments are covered by all-risk insurance, which costs about 0.5% of the instrument's value per year. This care ensures that every instrument is available in the best possible condition, can be played at the highest level, and continues to "mature" in sound.

Support that reaches into the coming centuries – what does that look like?

We have a 500-year plan for the Foundation's work. The string instruments we know today as historic masterpieces with an enchanting sound are often between 250 and 400 years old. They have matured over the centuries. The contemporary master instruments we are able to acquire through donations are likewise expected to perform at the highest level for many centuries. That offers our donors a compelling perspective on their commitment: Even a single donation creates an impact "for eternity."

What inspired you to establish the Foundation and lead it to success?

As is so often the case, it is a combination of my professional path and personal passion. For many years, my work has focused on string instruments as an investment asset, and I have in-depth, well-founded knowledge of the market. My wife, Laura Zarina, is a concert violinist with an international career, and she, too, was only able to realize her full potential thanks to loans of instruments with an outstanding sound. We wanted to give something back and, at the same time, create something lasting. Our volunteer work is wonderfully rewarded when, together with like-minded people, we create something that will outlive us all.

After I completed my training as a Certified Foundation Manager (DSA), our plans took increasingly concrete shape in 2023. A wonderful, supportive network

gave us valuable ideas. And then something encouraging happened! We received pledges from two major donors totaling almost half a million euros. We were very surprised and delighted that both women committed to making a real difference, even though the Foundation did not yet legally exist. We moved quickly to establish it. Today, we are a team of experienced specialists, and our collection of instruments keeps growing.

Does it matter to donors to know which string instrument their gift will fund and which artist will play it?

Definitely. If they wish, donors can present the instrument in person — a very special moment. This concrete connection makes the commitment tangible for our donors. In this way, a single, individual major gift has a clearly defined and lasting impact. And if someone makes a will in favor of the Foundation today, we ensure that the gift serves its intended purpose precisely and permanently after their passing.

From idea to donation — what's the best way to go about it?

The most important step is to get in touch early — ideally for a personal conversation during your lifetime. Rather than leaving a bequest, we recommend making a lifetime gift. The advantage is that you can experience and enjoy the impact of your generosity firsthand!

But even if you decide on a bequest, we regard an estate gift, in the deepest sense, as a binding obligation that we honor exactly as the donor intended. The more thoroughly we discuss the various giving options in advance, the more reliably we can carry out each donor's individual wishes. What matters to us is experiencing the impact of this commitment together with our donors — in informative conversations, at concerts, and in a genuine partnership.

And finally, the "wish list" question: What would be a dream come true for the fundraising team?

Our vision is to one day be among the most important foundations in the string world, with more than 100 string instruments of exceptional tonal quality in our collection.

Our next major goal is to acquire five more instruments. One of them is a very special violin by the German master luthier Martin Schleske. The dream, of course, would be the next major gift — and many friends who carry the Foundation's vision forward.

As I said, by joining forces, we are creating something unique in the world with the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation — a world-class institution sustained by private philanthropy. And who knows what miracle might happen next week...

Interview and text: Pia Barth

Christian Reister heads the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation. A Certified Foundation Manager (DSA), he is dedicated to string instruments and to supporting top young talent. As early as 2014, he founded VIOLIN ASSETS GmbH, which specializes in string instruments as an asset class. Together with his wife, Laura Zarina, a concert violinist who performs internationally, he established the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation in 2024. The goal: to build a first-class collection of instruments for future generations. A trained banker with a law degree, he previously worked in private and institutional asset management.

Donations and Endowments to the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation



*"Music speaks for itself,
provided we give it a chance"*

Yehudi Menuhin (1916–1999)

How can outstanding musical talent be nurtured while irreplaceable cultural heritage is preserved for generations to come? Whether the goal is to foster classical music and European musical culture or to carry on time-honored craftsmanship, support often calls for new and effective approaches. Private individuals, foundations, and companies can make a valuable contribution by giving talented young musicians what they need most for their development: access to string instruments of exceptional tonal quality.

Founded in Frankfurt am Main in 2024, the nonprofit INSTRUMENTUM Foundation has set itself the ambitious goal of adding more than 100 outstanding string instruments to its collection. In doing so, it aims to become one of the most important institutions in the global string world, with a lasting impact. Private individuals and foundations make a vital contribution to supporting young talent and preserving historic instruments by backing the Foundation's programs:

- They provide targeted support for highly gifted musicians by having the Foundation lend them first-class string instruments they could not afford on their own. The loans are free of charge.

- They help preserve valuable cultural heritage for the long term, as the Foundation professionally maintains the instruments, adjusts their sound, and safeguards them for generations to come.
- Through an instrument scholarship, they make a specific instrument possible (with a gift starting at €65,000 or a six-figure sum). If desired, the scholarship can bear the donor's name, and its impact will extend indefinitely into the future.
- They become part of a community of patrons steeped in tradition and carry the classic ideal of patronage into the present day.

Which form is the best fit — a donation, an endowment gift, an inheritance, or a bequest — can be discussed in confidence with the INSTRUMENTUM Foundation team, including how the Foundation can be named as an heir or how gifts made during your lifetime can support specific young musicians.

Best of all: Those who give during their lifetime can experience the lasting impact of their commitment up close at concerts. At the same time, reliable structures ensure that the purpose of a one-time gift will still be fulfilled many decades and centuries from now.



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