

How companies like Violin Assets help budding musicians get their hands on unattainable instruments

by Laura Barnes

Thursday, August 18th 2016

Professional classical instruments are not cheap, so what happens when a promising young musician is in need of an exceptional instrument?

Violin Assets recently spoke about this very situation.

Manuel Lipstein is a promising young musician. He comes from a musical family. His parents recognised and encouraged his talent at an early stage.

He received his first lessons when he was six years old. At the age of eight, he made his first appearance as a soloist. Now, at 15 years old, he is studying at the Cologne Conservatory, participating in the excellence programme Pre-College Cologne.

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“Exceptional musicians are always on the lookout for exceptional instruments. Only a perfect instrument can perfectly express the sound they seek to create,” said Violin Assets.

The company specialises in the business of high-quality string instruments. Based at Bedburg Castle near Cologne, this is where Lipstein discovered a valuable Zanoli cello. Financially, the instrument was out of his reach.

Nevertheless, he played a few notes on it, and was instantly ecstatic. “The sound of the instrument was gorgeous. Every time he played it, it almost took his breath away,” said Violin Assets.

„I wish with all my heart you would find a buyer for that instrument,” Lipstein wrote to Jost Thöne, co-owner of Violin Assets.

Thöne, himself a trained violist, looked in every direction – and actually found a buyer. It was a German foundation that preferred not to have its name published.

It purchased the Zanoli cello and provided it to Lipstein in April of this year, on a long-term basis. In June he played his first concerts with it.

“For private investors who wish to act as patrons, but also for foundations, high-quality string instruments can be an interesting investment,” explained Violin Assets. “Particularly if one of the foundation’s objectives is related to art/culture or is to foster excellence, and such an investment is thus in line with the foundation’s charter and its funding purposes.

“From an investment point of view, a high-quality instrument meets the criteria that are relevant for foundations: yield, security and liquidity.”

The firm continued: “What is not generally known is that high-quality string instruments are extremely stable in terms of value retention. Their value does not evolve in correlation to other asset classes such as stocks, pensions, gold or real estate, or else is only slightly correlated, and is also independent of exchange rate fluctuations.

“The instrument market is largely dominated by long-term investors. This may be one reason that top instruments even show a tendency to increase continuously in value. According to the „Fuchs Tax“ relevant to this market, high-quality string instruments have recorded an average increase in value of between five and eight percent p.a. in the past one hundred years. Individual pieces that are particularly high profile are significantly higher.”