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Editor's notebook: Florida Orchestra's \$10M gift fuels permanent home ambitions



The Florida Orchestra's Principal Cello Yoni Draiblate performs at a recent concert.

JAMES ZAMBON



By [Alexis Mueller](#) – Editor, Tampa Bay Business Journal
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The Florida Orchestra's recently announced record \$10 million gift is not earmarked for bricks and mortar.

Still, its ripple effect could be felt in the orchestra's long-term ambitions to grow its audience and community impact – including a permanent home.

[TFO CEO](#) Ignacio Barrón Viela said [the anonymous donation](#) will be allocated to the endowment and investment fund, not the annual budget or real estate

plans. The financial security gives the organization breathing room to pursue one of its ambitious goals: securing more support for a dedicated facility in the coming year.

Plans, budget and location are continuing to take shape, Barrón Viela said, but it's still too early to provide specific details. Since April, as many as five different unnamed consultants have been working with the orchestra to analyze economic impact, patron trends and space needs. Barrón Viela [describes a vision](#) that includes rehearsal halls with state-of-the-art recording capabilities, classrooms for education and collaborative spaces for other nonprofits in an "orchestra center."

"Amen, thank God, hallelujah," said Charlie Imbergamo, CEO at the Nonprofit Leadership Center in Tampa, of the donation. "How I would hope that that \$10 million gift would inspire somebody to help them get a gift to find a new home."

The stakes go beyond acoustics. A permanent home for the state's largest professional orchestra is an investment in TFO as a cultural anchor, signaling sophistication and stability in a region competing for talent and potentially achieving global recognition.

"[Having a permanent facility] would mean being able to highlight a community project with a relevant story, and the orchestra being able to play that piece and record it, and maybe one day being able to be nominated for a Grammy," he said. "We are at that level right now."

Past TFO board chair Greg Yadley, a corporate attorney at Shumaker, said the institution's elevation has a direct connection to economic growth and talent development. Richer cultural assets stimulate minds and attract people.

"Music is a communication device that doesn't depend on your language or even your upbringing," Yadley said. "We are seeing younger people in the concert hall and more diverse people."

For a growing metro like Tampa Bay, that matters. A healthy orchestra enriches intellectual life, attracts diverse audiences and helps keep creative professionals rooted in the region, he said.

THE LIST

Largest cultural nonprofits in Tampa Bay

Revenue 2024

Rank	Prior Rank	Business name
1	2	Mote Marine Laboratory Inc.
2	13	Sarasota Orchestra
3	1	David A. Straz, Jr. Center for the Performing Arts
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